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Carew's *A Rapture*: A Paradoxical Encomium on Erotic Love

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In"A Rapture," Thomas Carew presents as a paradoxical thesis an extraordinary encomium on free love, a love free from any moral or social restrictions. In response to the critics who read "A Rapture" as a libertine creed advocating unrestricted love, I wish to suggest that "A Rapture" can be read as a satire against the libertine lover and his philosophy of unrestricted love. I shall argue below that the lover who satirizes honor all through the poem in the end makes himself the object of satire.

In the closing couplet of "A Rapture," the persona, who has been both lover and satirist, dramatically transforms the prevailing tone of the poem when he poses to Celia the rhetorical question:

> Then tell me why
> This goblin Honour which the world adores,
> Should make men Atheists, and not women Whores.
> (164-66)[1]

The use of the word "Whores," rhyming with "adores," as the very last word in "A Rapture" has the effect for the reader of inverting the poem from being an encomium on an erotic love that is wild and free into a satire against a love with no limits. The lover has

[1]All references to Thomas Carew's works are to *The Poems of Thomas Carew with his Masque Coelum Britannicum*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

been deriding honor and chastity in grotesque images throughout the poem, but, in the final couplet, we find that he confesses to Celia that the world adores honor, and also suggests by his use of the word "Whores" that he in fact believes that women without honor are bad. The rhyming of "Whores" with the term "adores" logically couples a complementary sense of references onto the rhymed pair; if the world adores honor, then it will scorn whores. The vituperative quality of the word "whore" as it was used in the seventeenth century implies a moral perspective where female chastity was considered sacred.[2] When the persona confirms that the world adores the "goblin Honour" in the closing couplet of "A Rapture," he implies that humanity worships honor as a sacred object. Carew invariably uses the verb "adore" in his poetry with reference to a deity, or to some feature that can be considered sacred, as the object of adoration.[3] Thus, the effectiveness of the suitor's rhetoric is undermined in the concluding couplet because, in the first place, he no longer treats honor merely as a grotesque monster, but instead, as something sacred, which can only provide Celia with all the more reason to preserve her honor. Second, the suitor's rhetorical question, which seems to be posed as a net to

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[2]According to the O.E.D., the word "whore" besides referring to a prostitute or a harlot, more generally refers to "an unchaste or lewd woman." In English culture, hereditary male authority and identity were grounded in stable familial and social relations that privileged the male. The loose behavior of an unchaste wife would have the effect of blotting out the kinship identity of the male heir. In Carew's "A married Woman," the male persona discloses his acceptance of these values when he resolves not to prejudice his marital "Right," and affirms, "if she be / A subject borne, she shall be so to me" (p. 115, 4-5).

[3]For instance, the speaker in "A Rapture" declares: "Meanwhile . . . / Th'enamoured chirping Wood-quire shall adore / In varied tunes the Deitie of Love" (45-7). Again, the moral speaker in "Good counsel to a young Maid" warns the chase maid of the false Pilgrim who "flings / His body to the earth, where He / Prostrate adores the flowing Deitie" (p. 25).

ensnare Celia's credulity, *prima facie*, can be easily answered. For, in the context of seventeenth century cultural values, the sacredness of female chastity overrode the value of any loss that a lover might suffer in the performance of some service for his mistress. The question itself echoes the suitor's complaint that honor requires men to violate their religious principles for the sake of their mistress, while it does not allow the mistress to satisfy her lover without being branded a whore.

The apparent inversion of themes, from praising to satirizing free love, that closes the poem leaves us faced with the following fundamental question. How can "A Rapture" be considered as a satire against unrestricted love when so much of the poem is devoted both to the celebration of erotic love and to the degradation of honor? In endeavoring to answer this question, I wish to elucidate how the paradoxical thesis on free love serves Carew in "A Rapture" as a fountain for his critical thoughts on important social and moral issues. In order to accomplish this objective, I shall first examine the persona's thesis on free love, by means of which he affirms that love offers its best delights when it is free from all social and moral restraints, and most significantly, when it is free from fear and shame.

Kevin Sharpe considers that the Elysium in "A Rapture" is a lover's utopia, "a world apart from society, a paradise, a land of innocence, free of sin."[4] He thinks that Carew is presenting man in his true natural glory where natural instinct is given a special opportunity to express itself. In "The Dreame," John Donne, suggesting a similar theme, maintains that love must be free from

[4]Kevin Sharpe, "Cavalier Critic? The Ethics and Politics of Thomas Carew's Poetry," *Politics of Discourse*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1987) pp. 117-46, 122.

"*Feare, Shame, Honor*" if it is to be "all spirit, pure, and brave" (p.37, 24-6).[5]

As a way of extolling the virtues of unrestricted love, Carew fashioned "A Rapture" with many distinctive carnivalesque qualities. Analogous to the experience of revelers who have become immerged in the festivities of a Saturnalia, the lovers in Carew's poem will experience, as portrayed by the persona, a oneness with nature, becoming aware that they are an integral part of life's physical cycle. The lover touches on the theme of fertility when he suggests to Celia that "the rich Mine," which is the "virgin-treasure" of her body, "shall ready still for mintage lye, / And we will coyne young *Cupids*" (32-5). The speaker, moreover, depicts the spirit of the lovers' rapture in their Elysium fields as a bodily ecstasy when he tells Celia, "And so our soules that cannot be embrac'd / Shall the embraces of our bodyes taste" (43-4). The lovers shall not experience any kind of spiritual bonding as a result of reveling in this sensual wonderland. In accord with the social inversion inherent in the festivities of a Saturnalia, the lover praises an erotic love that is totally free from social and cultural restrictions.[6] He informs Celia "There [in love's Elysium], shall the Queene of Love, and Innocence, / Beautie and Nature, banish all offence" (25-6). In the lover's utopia,

> the hated name
> Of husband, wife, lust, modest, chaste, or shame,
> Are vaine and empty words, whose very sound
> Was never heard in the Elizian ground.

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[5]All references to John Donne's poetry will be to *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Herbert J.C. Grierson, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968).

[6]Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), states that the carnivalesque celebrants are "outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity" (p. 255).

> All things are lawfull there, that may delight
> Nature, or unrestrained Appetite.(107-12)

By setting "A Rapture" in the context of the uninhibited activities of a Saturnalia, Carew cogently conveys to his reader that love flourishes only when it is free from fear and shame.

A banquet rich with carnivalesque qualities constitutes the extended erotic portion of "A Rapture." Carew creates all the delightful sounds, smells and sights of a lover's paradise in which the lover amazingly imagines himself to be a "bee" feasting and devouring the sweets of a rich and delicious garden —a domain consisting of many sexually exciting features of the female anatomy. The lover declares,

> So will I rifle all the sweets, that dwell
> In my delicious Paradise, and swell
> My bagge with honey, drawne forth by the power
> Of fervent kisses, from each spicie flower. (59-62)

Under the magic of alchemy, the lover will derive "one soveraigne Balme" (77) that he has distilled from "all those ravisht sweets" (75) of Celia's body, and "Then bring that great *Elixar* to thy [Celia's] hive" (78). Intoxicated with the delights of Celia's body, the lover's senses are enflamed. In some of the most explicit erotic lines of printed seventeenth century English poetry, the lover then describes his imagined sexual consummation with Celia:

> My Rudder, with thy bold hand, like a tryde,
> And skilfull Pilot, thou shalt steere, and guide
> My Bark into Loves channell, where it shall
> Dance, as the bounding waves doe rise or fall. (87-90)

The lover, then, fancies that the heavenly love powers will crown the concupiscence of their "sportfull houres" (96) with a delightful tranquility, when he informs Celia, "That with such Halcion calmenesse," these powers will "fix our soules / In steadfast peace,

as no affright controules" (97-8). Here, the lover expresses in fresh, rich imagery what lovers may experience after orgasm.[7]

Noting Carew's exaggeration and caricatures of Honor, critics have readily discerned in "A Rapture" a satire against the codes of honor as these are construed and used within a hypocritical society. However, they have not recognized that these images of honor as created by Carew are placed in the context of the grotesque body, which is a central feature in the corporal domain of the carnival.[8] The topsy-turvy world of the carnival is a natural site for launching a critical assessment of oppressive social practices. It is by means of burlesque, parody, and satire of the old in the context of the

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[7]Sharpe presents an informative interpretation of the lover's Elysium but veers off course when he imposes a spiritual quality into the "Halcion calmenesse" (97) that the lovers may experience following consummation. The relaxing and settling effect that Carew's lovers may experience after sexual orgasm is more akin to the release and regeneration revelers may experience while participating in the grotesque bodily life of carnival festivities. Focusing on the effects that sexual consummation may have on the lovers, Margaret Ezell (in "Thomas Carew and the Erotic Law of Nature," *Explorations In Renaissance Culture,* [1988], pp. 99-114), likewise, inappropriately reads into the "Halcion calmenesse" that the lovers mutually experience the grounds of a spiritual bond. Ezell contends, "sexual intercourse as portrayed in 'A Rapture' is the means through which souls unite, not something to which the soul 'descends'" (p. 112). She begs the question when she turns to "Loves Force," "Feminine Honour," and other love lyrics to demonstrate that Carew took the notion of sexuality in "A Rapture" to be something more than just a raw animal instinct, to be immediately and indiscriminately satisfied. The right question is whether or not there is anything like true love in the mind of the lover.

[8]Though she does not seem to detect the carnalivalesque nature of Carew's poem, Renée Hannaford at least recognizes that Carew utilizes the hyperbole of reduction as a way of perceiving honor in the context of conventional culture ("'My Unwashed Muse': Sexual Play and Sociability in Carew's 'A Rapture'," *English Language Notes,* 27 [1989]: 32-9).

carnivalesque that alternative social and political possibilities can be envisioned.

In *Rabelais and His* World, Mikhail Bakhtin maintains that in the grotesque realism of carnival life "all that is sacred and exalted is rethought on the level of the material bodily stratum."[9] Moreover, degradation, an essential element in the grotesque, transfers "all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract...to the material level."[10] In "A Rapture," the speaker as a satirist inverts honor from an abstract social attribute into a multiple of grotesque images. In the first section of the poem, he concludes his first attack against honor by degrading society's precious ideal, "once thought / The seed of Gods," to a mere tool created by the sexually greedy to "empale free woman" (17-20). Additionally, he personifies and degrades honor by using the exaggerated bodily images of a "Gyant" (3), a "Masquer" (4), a "vast Idoll" who has "huge Collosses legs" (6-8), a "grim Swisse" (10), a "stalking Pageant ... / With borrowed legs" (15-6), a "Monsters head" (23), a "Tyrant" (144), a "proud *Vsurper*" (150), a "false Impostor" (154), and finally a "Goblin" (165). In accord with traditional parodies found in the folk humor of carnivals, the speaker also transforms the female worthies of myth and antiquity (Lucrece, Penelope, Daphne, and Laura, all of whom are reputed for their virtue and chastity) to free and passionate lovers. He then concludes,

> These, and ten thousand Beauties more, that dy'de
> Slave to the Tyrant, now enlarg'd, deride
> His cancell'd lawes. (143-45)

In reference to the universal principle of procreation, the speaker exposes through the use of grotesque images that the established truths of honor and chastity in society are in the end merely arbitrary social conventions—relative, capricious, and fraudulent.

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[9]Bakhtin, p. 370.
[10]Bakhtin, p. 19.

Variety and change in the life of the grotesque body undermine all regard for the stability and permanence of the conventions that constitute the hierarchical social structure of the community.[11]

The critics Ada Long and Hugh Maclean contend that Carew's satire on honor in "A Rapture" poses a new social order that does not inhibit and restrict authentic behavior.[12] In the poem's vigorous attack on honor, Carew can be seen as lashing out at the hypocrisy and inconsistency of social conventions concerning matters of love and marriage. However, Long and Maclean go too far in thinking that Carew envisions a social order where "men and women are neither atheists nor whores; they are free to be themselves."[13] For, in none of his works, as far as I can observe, does Carew press for this kind of radical transformation of his seventeenth-century English heritage.

The paradoxical thesis at the thematic center of "A Rapture," as presented above, is the celebration of a love that is free from fear and shame. The genuine merits of the persona's thesis on love as well as his satire on honor seem to heighten even more the difficulty of explaining how "A Rapture" can be considered a satire against free love. Is there a special literary device or technique that Carew employs to induce his reader to recognize the poem's thematic inversion from an encomium to a satire on free love? I wish to show below that the lover's use of a specious argument as a means to seduce Celia in the final section of the poem turns the lover himself into the butt of satire. His argument, moreover, functions to prick the reader into an awareness of the virtues of true love and honor. In 1600, John Donne told Sir Henry Wotton

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[11]As Bakhtin informs us, the grotesque body "is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (p. 317). The leading themes of bodily life in the carnival are fertility, growth, and abundance.

[12]Ada Long and Hugh Maclean, " 'Deare *Ben*', 'Great DONNE', and 'my Celia': The Wit of Carew's Poetry," *SEL* 18 (Winter 1978): 75-94.

[13]Long and Maclean, p. 92.

that his prose paradoxes, which were published after his death in *Ivvenilia*, "are rather alarums to truth to arme her then enemies."[14] Donne, here, uses the term "truth" in the sense of moral wisdom. Accordingly, he created his paradoxes with the purpose of strengthening the wisdom of his readers against the enemies of moral truth. Moreover, he utilized the dialectical technique, moving from a thesis presentation to its antithesis, as a means of exposing these significant truths.

An analysis of how some of Donne's paradoxical poems and essays function as "alarums to truth" will provide us with a model for elucidating the structure of the thematic inversion that operates in "A Rapture." In a close examination of Donne's paradoxes, Michael McCanles distinguishes Donne's conceptual logic from the existential reference that the rationality in this logic may have to its object. He contends, "extension of the logical argument has as its primary purpose the pushing of a given argument to the point where its inadequacy for reflecting reality becomes fully recognizable."[15]

The delights of variety and change in love affairs is a principal theme in Donne's poems "Confined Love," "The Indifferent," "Elegie III: Change," "Elegie XVII: Variety," and his paradoxical essay "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy." Donne places his encomium on diversity in love affairs in the rich mine of natural phenomena. In "Confined Love" and "Change," for example, the reader is confronted with the argument: if birds and beasts mate freely, why should not women, who thrive on diversity, follow nature's example. In "Change," the speaker closes his ironical panegyric on unrestricted love by stating that "Change'is the nursery / Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity" (p. 83). In "The

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[14]John Donne, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin, (Toronto: Random House, 1952), p. 364.

[15]Michael McCanles, "Paradox in Donne," *Essential Articles for the study of John Donne's Poetry*, ed. John Roberts (Hamden: Archon Books, 1975), pp. 220-35, 227.

Indifferent," the speaker acknowledges, in an oath sworn by *Venus*, "Variety" to be "Loves sweetest Part" (p. 13).

Donne's encomiums on the delights of diversity, however, should not be read as the poet's genuine position on love, but instead, as "alarums to truth." The praise of diversity is paradoxical in that the practice of freely changing sexual partners inverts the accepted mores of Donne's contemporaries.[16] The hyperbolic descriptions that Donne's personae utilize in their encomiums on change and inconstancy in women would have had the consequence of persuading the contemporary reader to focus on the real nature and true place of women in society. "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy" shows itself to have the style and humor of a paradoxical encomium, especially, when the speaker reduces women to such grotesque creatures "*Flies*, which feed among vs at our Table, or *Fleas* sucking our very blood, who leaue not our most retired places free from their familiarity."[17] In "Change," women are not just compared to foxes and goats in their sexual diversity but are said to be "more ho-t, wily, wild then these" (p.83, line 12). The comparison of women to flies, fleas, foxes, and goats has the effect of awakening readers to the truth that women are neither insects nor beasts but genuine persons with a moral personality. Just because motion and change constitute an integral quality in nature, and humans naturally enjoy diversity, it does not follow that the concept of change should be a distinguishing characteristic

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[16]In a landmark study of paradoxical literature in the seventeenth and 18th centuries, Henry Miller (in "The Paradoxical Encomium with Special Reference to Its Vogue in England, 1600-1800," *Modern Philology*, 53:3 [1956]: 145-78) maintains that "the paradoxical encomium is a species of rhetorical jest or display piece which involves the praise of unworthy, unexpected, or trifling objects" (p. 145). He also considers that Desiderius Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium* (*Praise of Folly*) "gave an enormous impetus to the writing of such pieces" (p.154).

[17]I. Donne, "A Defence of Womens Insconstancy," *IVVENILIA: Or Certaine Paradoxes, and Problems*, (London: 1633), A3-B, A4r.

of man in the framework of his cultural, moral, and political environment. Donne has pressed the logic of change and variety as found in nature to the point where it becomes clear that this logic no longer mirrors the reality of human existence. In the social milieu of Donne's culture, it is not variety, but truth and faithfulness that constitute the basis of true love.

The dialectical argument of "A Rapture" closely parallels the thematic structural movement that is found in Donne's "Variety": moving from the paradoxical thesis on the delights of diversity and unrestrained love to its antithesis, a satire on free love. As Carew places the lover's uninhibited rapture in the language of a Saturnalia, so Donne in his poem had set the persona's ideal of a diversity of partners into the Golden Age, an Age that was particularly celebrated in the Saturnalia. Bemoaning the loss of the Golden Age, the speaker in "Variety" informs us,

> How happy were our Syres in ancient times,
> Who held plurality of loves no crime!
> . . .
> Women were then no sooner asked then won,
> And what they did was honest and well done. (38-45)

The speaker here presents carnal love in an Age that was free from the restraints of shame and fear.

The amoral stance of Donne's persona in "Variety" provides us with a fertile analogy for the study of the libertine lover in "A Rapture." Using a similar conceit as does the lover in "A Rapture," the amoral lover in a "Variety" derides honor by describing it as "A monster in no certain sharpe attir'd" (52) adopted to impose "manners and laws to nations" (55). He then descries that at the expense of this monster, "love receiv'd immedicable harmes, / And was dispoiled of his daring armes" (56-7). In "A Rapture" as well as in "Variety," the lovers who dare to brave the monster honor are portrayed as heroes. The persona in "Variety" declares that it is "Onely some few strong in themselves and free / Retain the seeds

of antient liberty" (62-3). In "A Rapture," the lovers, in daring action, will depose honor, a "Tyrant" (143) and "*Vsurper*" (150), and "walke free, as they / With necks unyoak'd" (150-51).

The final lines of Donne's "Variety" invert the poem from an encomium on diversity to a panegyric of true love. The persona acknowledges that in time, "With firmer age" (77), he "Shall not so easily be to change dispos'd" (79), and then concludes,

> But beauty with true worth securely weighing,
> Which being found assembled in some one,
> Wee'l love her ever, and love her alone. (81-83)

True love supposes that the lovers are mature and discrete. The persona acknowledges that given the right woman, where both beauty and virtue are combined, he could be faithful to her alone. The conversion of the libertine lover in "Variety" to the faithful lover suggests that Donne meant his poem to be a satire on free love. Donne's paradox on diversity in "Variety" acts as an "alarum to truth" because the reader learns through the inversion of the lover's stance that, in the end, "firmer Age," an age of maturity and discretion, supports the possibility of a true love. The erotic exploits and adventures of the libertine lover are equated to the pastimes and sports of an adolescent expending his youthful virility, all of which have little consequence compared to the worth of true love. In her study of "A Rapture," Paula Johnson opines that the lover's panegyric on love's Elysium "is the wish-fulfilling dream of an adolescent, graceful, charming, and utterly self-absorbed."[18]

The thematic inversion in "A Rapture" is far more dramatic than the philosophical, abstract tone of the inversion found in Donne's "Variety." As we saw above, the use of the rhymed pair, "adores" and "Whores," in the final couplet of "A Rapture" has the

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[18]Paula Johnson, "Carew's 'A Rapture': The Dynamics of Fantasy," *SEL* 16 (Winter 1976): 145-55, 151.

consequence of inverting the poem from the amoral perspective of a libertine lover to the moral perspective of a culture, where a woman's chastity is preeminently esteemed. The speaker himself in the closing lines sets the stage for this dramatic inversion by tempting Celia to yield with a specious argument. By stooping to sophistry in wooing Celia, the lover exposes himself to the same ridicule that he has been leveling at society's duplicitous use of honor. I wish now to evaluate more closely the lover's argument in order to illustrate how it can function for the reader as an "alarum to truth."

Appealing to Celia to free herself from the burden of honor (150-51), the lover argues:

> nor is it just that Hee [honor]
> Should fetter your soft sex with Chastitie,
> Which Nature made unapt for abstinence;
> When yet this false Impostor can dispence
> With humane Justice, and with sacred right,
> And maugre both their lawes command me fight
> With Rivals, or with emulous Loves, that dare
> Equall with thine, their Mistresse eyes, or haire:
> If thou complaine of wrong, and call my sword
> To carve out thy revenge, upon that word
> He bids me fight and kill, or else he brands
> With markes of infamie my coward hands,
> And yet religion bids from blood-shed flye,
> And damns me for that Act. (151-64)

In the final movement of "A Rapture," the lover, shifting his grounds, contends that Celia should reject any claims of honor because as a code of conduct it is unfair. It commands men to "dispence / With humane Justice, and with sacred right" (154-55) for the sake of serving their mistress, but does not command women to disregard the laws of chastity for the sake of their lover. Given the inconsistency and unfairness of the codes of honor, it naturally follows, according to the lover, that Celia should liberate

herself from the restraints of honor and yield to the natural delights of love's Elysium. The lover's argument conveys to the reader the bizarre trap into which society with its absurd conventions on honor and love places lovers.

When the lover's argument is viewed from the perspective of seventeenth century values, the lover's stance becomes apparent, having the effect of alerting the reader to the wiles of a libertine lover. From Celia's perspective, both religion and the laws of love command her chastity. The persona muddles the issue of Celia's honor by setting the tenets of religion (Christianity "bids from blood-shed flye" [line 163]) in opposition to the conventional codes of love (to "fight and kill" [line 161] for the sake of one's mistress). The underlying contention in the speaker's argument is that because honor commands incompatible behavior (to kill and not to kill), it, therefore, must be useless in determining right conduct. The speaker evokes an imaginary moral dilemma to which men in love may be subjected in order to persuade Celia to relinquish her honor. It does not follow that the principles of morals, or honor, are meaningless if one, in the context of one's culture, is faced with difficult, or even contradictory, choices. In fact, moral dilemmas are part of the landscape in resolving the critical issues of casuistry. Thus, the lover's argument is fallacious because the logic that he uses to discredit honor mirrors neither the casuistry of practical ethics nor the reality of Celia's moral situation.

Furthermore, the lover's *stance* rings hollow because he fails to distinguish the principles that he himself accepts from contemporary social conventions. In likening honor to the "grim Swisse" who "denies Only tame fooles a passage, that not know / He is but forme" (10-11), the lover implies that honor is without any substance. The principles of honor may differ among people simply because their primary interests in life differ. For example, honor for the statesman may be based on justice, for the churchman piety, for the warrior valor, for the woman chastity, and for the lover truth and faithfulness. When a person accepts

certain principles of honor not just as conventional rules imposed by society but as an integral element of personality, then honor takes on real content for that individual. The substance of one's honor lies in one's fortitude to defend and stand by one's principles.[19] The crucial question for the suitor is not what society considers to be honorable, but whether his mistress is worthy of his choice. Is he willing to be true and faithful to her? This question, left unanswered, demonstrates the hollowness of the lover's *character* and, consequently, has the effect of inverting "A Rapture" into a satire against the libertine lover.

Carew depicts the libertine lover, elsewhere, as a danger to female chastity. For instance, in both his "Good counsel to a young Maid" poems, Carew has his personae warn the respective maidens against the wiles of a sexual opportunist. In the first "Good counsel" poem, the speaker cautions the chaste maid that the unfaithful lover has,

> Netts, of passion finest thred,
> Snaring poems, will be spred,
> All, to catch thy maiden-head. (p.13)

In the second "Good Counsell" poem, the speaker describes how the imploring and tearful Pilgrim when once "his burning thirst is quencht" (p. 25) may desert her with disdain. In "A Rapture," the lover proves himself to be a sexual predator, like the "tearful Pilgrim," when he tempts Celia with a specious, sophistical argument. He seeks to exploit a conceptual inconsistency in honor

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[19]In Carew's "Feminine Honour," the reader will discover that in matters of love, virtue is an end in itself, i.e., pure in itself and its own reward. The speaker says, "Faire Innocence" and chastity are qualities of character that are "Harder than steele, fiercer then fire" (p. 60). The chaste woman can walk over "red hot plowshares" without pain (see John Selden, *Table Talk*, ed. Edward Arber [London: 1905], p.112). Rhodes Dunlap points out in his commentary on "Feminine Honour" that Carew may have heard this bit of mythology from Selden himself (p. 245).

that has no reference to any existential inconsistency in Celia's position. The apparent fallacy of the seducer's argument has the effect of alerting the reader to reconsider, as the antithesis to unrestricted love, the old moral values found in true love: constancy and faithfulness. Carew's paradox in "A Rapture" serves in the same way as Donne said that his paradoxes in *Ivvenilia* were to function: as "alarums to truth."

The lover's character in Carew's "To A.L. *Perswasions to love*" sets off the predatory nature of the lover in "A Rapture." His rhetoric is not based on the fallacious reasoning that we discovered within the lover's argument in "A Rapture," but on a genuine respect for "A.L." as a person. In spite of his use of seductive rhetoric, he stays attuned to her needs. The lover vows to "A.L." that "when your beauties end" he will "Remaine still firme" (p.5, 50-1); he will "Love for an age, not for a day" (57-8). There is no basis in the poem, as Renée Hannaford contends, that the lover's vows of constancy should be considered morally suspect. The "detached, ironic attitude toward 'A.L.'" that Hannaford attributes to the suitor does not make him a sexual predator, as may be the case with the lover in "A Rapture."[20]

Contemporary scholars have not discerned in "A Rapture" how the saturnalian playfulness of erotic love in the poem is balanced against true love. They seemed to have missed the paradoxical nature of "A Rapture" because they have not recognized the sophistry inherent in the lover's argument. On the other hand, Johnson has been one of the few critics who have noted the thematic inversion that closes the poem. She maintains that the

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[20]Renée Hannaford, "Responses to a Waning Mythology in Carew's Political Poetry," *SEL* 26 (Winter 1986): 97-106. Hannaford fails to penetrate the moral quality of the lover's affection for 'A.L.' when she, focusing on the lover's rhetoric and style of courtship, concludes, "the lover's detached, ironic attitude toward 'A.L.' throughout the poem makes his adoption of the conventional role of the eternal lover [...] morally suspect but stylistically appropriate" (p. 103).

use of the word "Whores" in the last line "suddenly re-inverts the whole moral world that the poet has been so carefully turning up side-down," thereby admitting that "honor wins in the end."[21] She concludes that the lovers have no choice but to conform to "the ungracious demands of the hypocritical world."[22] However, she overlooks the dynamics of the poem's paradoxical thesis on love because she insists, "the poet's argument in lines 151-164 is effective."[23]

In conjunction with embedding the rapture of free love in the context of the carnivaleque, the libertine persona in "A Rapture" plays on the skeptic and naturalistic philosophy that became prevalent in the literature of early seventeenth century. The naturalists no longer viewed the primary laws and institutions of the social order as being valid only when derived from certain universal or eternal laws of nature, but instead, viewed them only as a consequence of mere custom, which varied from one society to another. In "*The Essayes*," Montaigne, a popular representative of the naturalist's position in early seventeenth-century England, embraced the study of man from the perspective of a science that would be devoid of any metaphysical and speculative claims but limited to the particular, to the empirical and practical world of behavior. In "A Rapture," the lover appears to utilize in his final argument against honor an instance of conflicting laws that can be discovered in Montaigne's essay, "Of Custom." As an example of a double law, Montaigne discloses, "by the law and right of armes he that putteth up an injurie shall be degraded of honour and nobilitie; and he that revengeth himself of it, shall by the civill Law incurre a capital punishment."[24] In this case, Montaigne intended

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[21]Johnson, p. 155.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Lord Michael De Montaigne, *The Essayes or, Morall, Politike, and Militatie Discovrses,* trans. I. Florio, 3rd Ed., (London; 1633): I.22, p. 52.

to show how lawful custom in a nation's judicial system, boosted by an added fourth state of lawyers, could deteriorate into conflicting double laws. Based on a naturalistic concept of love between the sexes, the libertine persona in "A Rapture" has in effect mounted a revolt against the customs of chastity and marriage.[25] However, as pointed out above, the satire on free love in the final couplet of "A Rapture" makes an impact on the reader because of the deep adoration that the English gentility of early seventeenth century held for female chastity. That the world adores honor in a woman suggests that the world sees the moral value of chastity as having a religious origin transcending mere custom. Then again, the specious argument that the persona offers in the final lines alerts the reader at the expense of libertinism to the possibility that the true love of faithful lovers forms a spiritual bond transcending the physical appetites.

"A Rapture" closes as a satire on both the libertine lover and his philosophy of unrestricted love, yet it also gives the reader an evocative and persuasive thesis on a love that is free from fear and shame. By placing the speaker's encomium on erotic love within the language of the free and grotesque bodily life of a Saturnalia, Carew elevates his poem to a celebration of procreation and fecundity. Sensual love set in the golden state of nature, or a Saturnalia, is wild and free. However, in "Loves Force," Carew's speaker acknowledges that order and choice in love affairs do not arise until a subsequent Age. When love transcends wild lust,

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The first edition of Florio's translation of *The Essayes* was printed in 1603.

[25]Though a Naturalist, Montaigne remained an archconservative in upholding the laws and local customs of one's group or nation. He declared, "For that is the rule of rules, and generall law of lawes, for every man to observe those of place wherein he liveth" (Ibid., I.22, p. 52). Montaigne also states, "chastitie is an excellent vertue, the commoditie whereof is very well knowne" (p. 51). Moreover, he argues that chastity is most easily justified not by means of "first and universiall reasons," but "according to custome, to lawes and precepts" (p. 51).

finding a spiritual basis, it becomes a "heavenly sparke" that gives birth to true love and honor. Without having professed to Celia any desire for an enduring spiritual attachment, Carew's lover in "A Rapture" shows himself to be nothing more than a sexual predator, an object of scorn. True love, with its own laws, functions as a reference by which the free love of the libertine can be judged and ridiculed.

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